

Victim - Witness Assistance Program

U.S. Department of Justice



United States Attorney's Office
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VICTIM-WITNESS ASSISTANCE

The goal of the Victim-Witness Assistance Program in the United States Attorney's Office is to ensure that victims of federal crime are treated with fairness and respect, and receive the services to which they are entitled to. A variety of notification and assistance services are available.

Notification Services

When a case reaches the prosecution stage in the criminal justice system, notification will be provided to the victims, and to witnesses, by request. Notification includes the filing of charges against the suspected offender, the custody status of the offender, the scheduling of court hearings, the terms of any negotiated plea or a verdict after trial, the opportunity to provide a victim impact statement, the date of sentencing, the sentencing judgement, and post sentencing notifications. The most common method of notification is by letter.

Other Assistance

For those needing additional assistance as a result of the crime, referrals can be made to agencies which provide direct services and there is assistance with the court process, court waiting areas, translator services, and employer contact. Additional services are available for child victims and witnesses and for victims of domestic violence.

RIGHTS OF CRIME VICTIMS 42 U.S. C. Section 10606 (b)

As a federal crime victim, you have the following rights:

- The right to be treated with fairness and with respect for the victim's dignity and privacy.
- The right to be reasonably protected from the accused offender.
- The right to be notified of court proceedings.
- The right to be present at all public court proceedings related to the offense, unless the court determines that testimony by the victim would be materially affected if the victim heard other testimony at trial.

RIGHTS OF CRIME VICTIMS

42 U.S. C. Section 10606 (b)

(continued)

As a federal crime victim, you have the following rights:

- The right to confer with the attorney for the Government in the case.
- The right to restitution.
- The right to information about the conviction, sentencing, imprisonment, and release of the offender.

PROSECUTION STEPS

Listed below are the steps in the federal criminal justice system. Depending on the case, not every step is taken in every case.

- Filing of criminal complaint/charge
- Arrest of the offender, if not already in custody
- Initial Appearance by the offender
- Preliminary Hearing
- Grand Jury Hearing
- Arraignment and Plea
- Hearings on Motions
- Change of Plea to Guilty or Trial
- Verdict
- Sentencing

There are many cases in which the offender will change the initial not guilty plea to guilty. When this happens, the case will not go to trial and as a victim or witness, you will not have to testify in court. If the case does go to trial, and you do not reside on Oahu, the U.S. Attorney's Office will make the necessary travel arrangements for your appearance in court. You will receive advance notification.

If you are threatened or feel that you are being harassed because of your contribution to the prosecution of the case, contact the Victim Witness Coordinator, the Assistant U.S. Attorney assigned to the case, or the Case Agent immediately. Additional penalties can be established for harassment and other threats.

IMPACT OF CRIME

Victims and witnesses are impacted by crime financially, physically, and/or emotionally. Although everyone reacts differently, victims and witnesses report some common behaviors:

- Increased concern for personal safety and family members.
- Difficulty handling everyday problems, at times, feeling overwhelmed.
- Going over the circumstances of the crime again and again.
- Trouble concentrating, loss of appetite, and loss of sleep.
- Anger, frustration, and confusion.
- Difficulties from financial loss.
- Feelings of vulnerability and helplessness are frequent right after victimization.
- A similar sight, sound, or smell that was present at the time of the crime may trigger similar reactions.

All of these reactions are normal to a traumatic event and hopefully, will lessen over time. If you continue to experience these reactions over a long period of time, contact the Victim Witness Coordinator.

VICTIM OF A VIOLENT CRIME

If you suffered bodily injury or loss of a loved one as a result of a violent crime, the State of Hawaii's Crime Victim Compensation Commission helps with crime related costs. You may be eligible to receive compensation for out-of-pocket medical expenses, counseling expenses, lost wages, or funeral and burial expenses. For information, contact:

Crime Victim Compensation Commission
State of Hawaii, Department of Public Safety
1136 Union Mall, Suite 600
Honolulu, HI 96813
Phone: (808) 587-1143
Fax: (808) 581-1146

CRIME VICTIM LEGISLATION

Victim and Witness Protection Act of 1982 (VWPA)

Victims of Crime Act of 1984

Victims Rights and Restitution Act of 1990

Violent Crime and Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994
(includes the Violence Against Women Act)

Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996

Victim Rights Clarification Act of 1997

Trafficking Victims Protection Act 2000

For more information contact:

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